

THE DIVINE DISCIPLINE

NO. 3335

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1913

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1867

*“As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young,
spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:
so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”
Deuteronomy 32:11-12*

MOSES in this chapter is speaking concerning Israel in the wilderness. When the great host came out of Egypt, they were, through the debasing influences of slavery—which are not easily or quickly shaken off—not much better than a mere mob. They were not at all fitted to march at once to take possession of Canaan, nor to take part in the compacts of organized social life. Therefore God, instead of taking them by the short way along which they might have passed in a very few days, ordained it so in His providence that they should wander about for forty years in the wilderness—partly, it is true, as a punishment for their unbelief, but also in order that the nation might be trained and educated for its future destiny—made as fit as it could be, to be the custodian of the oracles of truth and to be the receiver of the revelation which God intended to give to men.

If you will read carefully over the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness, I think you will see that the practical training which God adopted was—if they had been right-minded men—splendidly adapted to bring them to the very highest state of spiritual life. In some respects it was weak through their flesh, but the method itself was superlatively excellent.

Here was a people taken away from the multitude of gods which they had been wont to see on every hand in Egypt and they were taught to reverence an unseen God for whom they had no symbol whatsoever for some time. And afterwards, when symbolical worship in some form was ordained, yet there was still so little of symbol that Moses could say, “They saw no similitude.” They were trained to worship a *spiritual* God—in spirit and in truth.

They never saw Him, but every morning they had the best testimonies of His existence, for round about the camp lay the manna like hoarfrost, or dew, upon the ground. Their feet waxed not weary, neither did their garments become old all those years, and thus about their very clothes on their bodies and before them on their tables, they had constant proofs of the great God existing and caring for the sons of men.

The whole of their training, while it educated and developed their patience and their faith, had also the high purpose of teaching them gratitude, and to bind them by the cords of love and the bands of a man to the service of God. It was not because the training was not wise in the highest degree, but because they were children that were corrupters, and like ourselves, an evil and stiff-necked generation, that they did not learn even when God Himself became their Teacher.

Now in drawing a parallel between the children of Israel and ourselves, we shall invite you to notice, first, in the text—the *divine Instructor*, “the Lord alone did lead them.” And then *the method of instruction illustrated*—they were trained as an eagle trains the eaglet for their flight. First, then, we have—

I. A DIVINE INSTRUCTOR.

The Israelites had for their guide, instructor, and tutor, in order to prepare them for Canaan, none other than JEHOVAH Himself. He might employ Moses and Aaron, and He did also make use of those

marvelous picture books, if I may so call them, of sacrifice, and type, and metaphor, but still, God Himself was their guide and their instructor.

And it is so with us. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of the Christian church. Although He uses this Book, of which we can never speak too highly, although He uses still the ministry of the Word, for which we are thankful as for a candlestick which we trust may never be taken out of its place, still our true teacher is God the Holy Ghost. He instructs us in the truth, and meanwhile, it is also God who in the rulings and guiding of providence, is our instructor if we will but learn—teaching us, sometimes by sweet mercies, and at other times by bitter afflictions, instructing us from our cradles to our graves, if we will but open our eyes to see and our ears to hear the lessons which He writes and speaks.

We, alas! are often as the horse and as the mule which have no understanding—and will not be taught by the providential teachings, but still we have God to be our Teacher, and it is none other than our heavenly Father who is daily training us for the skies. If we be indeed His children and can say, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” we may also go to Him as our Teacher, believing He will yet, notwithstanding all our folly, make us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The text speaks of “the Lord alone.” Brethren, it is well for us that in providence we are led by “the Lord alone.” There is an over-ruling hand after all, notwithstanding our follies and our willfulness, so that God’s purposes are ultimately fulfilled. But I wish this were more true to our consciousness, that we are led by “the Lord alone.” I mean that we waited upon Him at every step of life. I am persuaded that the holiest of characters take more matters to God than you and I are accustomed to do. I mean they not only consult Him, as we do, upon certain great and critical occasions, but those saints who live nearest to Christ, go to Him about little matters, thinking nothing to be too trifling to tell into the ear of Christ.

Some things about which they will not even consult their kindest and wisest human friends will be matters of consultation between them and their Savior. Oh, what mistakes we should escape, what disasters we should avoid, if “the Lord alone” did guide us. And if we watched the signs of His hands in guiding us, if our eyes were to Him as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, anxious to know the Lord’s will and always saying to our own self-love, “Down, down, busy will. Down you proud spirit! What would *You* have me do, my Master, for Your will shall be my will and my heart shall ever give up its fondest wish, when once I understand what Your will is concerning me.”

Beloved, I am afraid that some strange god is often with us, even with us who are the people of God. We are united to God and He will gladly teach us, and from Him alone should we learn. But oftentimes we harbor in our heart idolatrous thoughts. All selfishness is idolatry. All repining against the providence of God has in it the element of rebellion against the Most High. If I love my own will and if I desire my own way in preference to God’s way, I have made a god of my own wisdom, or my own affection—and I have not been true in my loyalty to the only living and true God, even JEHOVAH.

Let us search, and look, and see if there is not some strange god with us. It may be hidden away, perhaps, and we may scarcely know it. It may be hidden, too, in that very part of us where our dearest affections dwell. Some Rachel may be sitting in the tent on the camel furniture under which the false gods are concealed. Let us, therefore, make a thorough search and then invite the Great King Himself to aid us. “Search me, O God, try me, and know my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The great truth which I want to bring forward, if I can, is this—that God in His providence and in grace, as far as we have been made willing to learn of Him, is educating us for something higher than this world. This world is the nature in which we dwell. Sometimes we who love the Lord mount up from it with wings as eagles, but we do not stay on the wing. We drop again—we cleave to earth.

’Tis our mother and it seems as though we can never rise permanently above our kinship to it. Very powerful is it in its attraction over us. Down we come again. We have not yet learned to keep up yonder, where the atmosphere is clear, and where the smoke of the world’s cares will not reach us.

But God is educating us for the skies. The meaning of these trials of yours, the interpretation of your sorrows is this—God is preparing you for another state, making you fit to dwell with angels and

archangels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. If this earth were all, then, your teachers at school, or your tutors when you passed through college, might have sufficed. But this world is but the vestibule to the next, and if you know, as well as man can teach you, how to play your part here with a view only to secular advancement, you are not yet educated at all in the highest sense. God Himself must teach and train you, that you may be fit to sit among the princes of the blood-royal before His throne and to have communion with those celestial spirits who—

*“With songs and choral symphonies
Day without night circle His throne rejoicing.”*

God is teaching you. God alone can do it and He will do it, but take care that you put away all strange gods and give yourselves up wholly to His guidance, submitting your will and your affections, and all parts of your spirit and nature to His teaching, that so you may be found fully ready when He shall say, “Come up hither to dwell with Me forever.” Now, passing from that, we shall notice very briefly, indeed—

II. THE METHODS OF THE DIVINE INSTRUCTION.

These methods of divine instruction are given to us under the very poetical picture of the eagle training its young ones for flight. God, to accommodate Himself to our poor understandings, sometimes compares Himself to a father with children. At other times to a mother with her little ones. Sometimes even to an animal. In this case, even to a bird of prey, so that we may but learn no depths of condescension are too great for the Great Teacher.

He compares Himself here, then, to the eagle. I suppose that Moses was well acquainted with the eagle’s natural habits. He describes it, first of all, as *stirring up its nest*, as though the young birds were unwilling to stir from their pleasant home. Having from the time of their birth been quiet and happy there, they had no anxiety whatever to try the blue unfathomable oceans of the air. They had no wish to leave the rocky refuge where they had been reared. They feared, perhaps, lest they might fall over the precipices and be dashed in pieces. Therefore is it said, “The eagle stirreth up her nest.”

She makes it uncomfortable for the little ones so that they may be willing to quit it, and that which would have been obnoxious and burdensome to them, they may come even to desire, namely, to be out of the nest. Someone has quaintly said that the eagle puts thorns into the nest, which prick the fledglings, so that they are anxious to get away.

Certain it is that God does thus with those He would train for the skies. He stirs up their nest. Cannot some of you recollect times when your nests were stirred *by providential dealings* while you were in sin? All things went well with you for a season, but you forgot God, and His Son Jesus had no attractions for you.

But suddenly the child sickened or the wife was smitten with death, or trade separated from you, or you yourselves were ill, or there was a famine in the land. Then it was, when you were in want, your nest being thoroughly stirred up, that you said, “I will arise and go unto my Father.”

The land of Goshen was like a nest to the Israelites. They had no desire to come out of it, but God stirred them up by means of Pharaoh, who kept them in heavy bondage, put them to making bricks and then to making bricks without straw, and then he slew their male children. In all sorts of ways, they were made to cry out under the bitter yoke.

We know that they loved that nest, for they often longed to be back in it. They talked of the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions, and the cucumbers which they did eat when they were in Egypt, so that the nest seems to have been a tolerably downy one to them at one time. But God so stirred it up that they longed to be away—and even the howling wilderness seemed a paradise compared with the house of bondage.

So was it with you. You found that the world was not what it seemed to be. Troubles increased, providential afflictions trod on each other's heels, and then you turned unto your God and bethought yourselves of your sins. And so He stirred up your nest *by inward trouble under conviction of sin*.

I know my soul's nest was very soft once. I thought I had done no great evil, that I had kept God's commandments from my youth up. But when conviction of sin came, then I discovered my heart to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Then my sins, like so many daggers, were at my heart, My soul was rent—I could say with gracious George Herbert,—

*“My thoughts are all a case of knives,
Wounding my heart.”*

There was no rest, no peace, no joy, no comfort to be found. Well, that was God stirring up the nest. If there are any of you in that condition now—uneasy and troubled about sin, I am glad of it. Your nest is being stirred, and God grant that you may fly from it and never come back to that nest again!

If all had gone smoothly with you, if sin had always been a sweet morsel to your tongue, we might despair of your ever being saved. But now you feel the smart of it, I trust it is, in order that you may be delivered from the guilt of it and led to find a Savior.

Well, since that, dear friends, how many times we have had our nests stirred up! I do not know your history, but you do, and I ask you now to look it over. Oh, you planned, and planned, and planned, and said, “Now I shall live in this house for the next twenty or thirty years, I shall live here, certainly, as long as I live anywhere.” And now you find yourselves, perhaps, fifty or a hundred miles from it.

You were in the service of a certain kind man and you felt very happy in it, but the firm has broken up and where are you now? There is that dear child you have set your heart upon. You have said, “What a mercy it will be to see him growing up! What a comfort he will be to me!” He is not a comfort to you, but just the very reverse, for he is your greatest sorrow. It is God stirring up your nest.

Whereas a few years ago you were in good, sound health, now the eyes begin to fail, or the ears are giving way, or there is some internal complaint, or some constant pain. Whereas years ago you were a master, you are now a servant—whereas years ago everybody looked up to you, now everybody looks down upon you. It is all the stirring up of the nest, because you have no abiding city here—because you were too prone to say, “My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved,” therefore God has stirred up your nest and He will do it yet again and again.

Between now and heaven, how many times will the nest of ours be stirred? Oh, blessed be God for it! “Moab is settled upon his lees: he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel”—and then comes a curse upon him. Sometimes these long periods of prosperity, and rest, and ease are very unhealthy for us poor unworthy and sinful beings. If we were more like Jesus, if we were more pure and heavenly, we could bear prosperity, but because we are so sinful, I question if any of us can bear it long.

If the Master shall give some of us outward prosperity, He will have to whip us behind the door in private to keep us right. We must have some thorn in the flesh, some secret grief—there must be some skeleton in the cupboard, some specter in some chamber of the house, or else we shall say, “Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years”—and when we do this we shall be modern fools like the great fool of old.

But the gracious Lord will not let His people get into that state. Again and again, and yet again, against their wishes, and contrary to their expectations, He will stir their nest and they shall cry out against it, but if they did but only know the meaning of it, or could read the whole of it in the light of eternity, they would bless the hand which tears away their comforts, seeing divine wisdom and infinite affection in it all. That, then, is the first thing—God instructs His people to mount aloft by stirring up their nests.

The next picture is *the eagle fluttering over her young*. What is that for? She wants them to mount, my brethren. Well, then, in order to teach them to mount, she first mounts, herself—“she fluttereth over

her young.” She moves her wings to teach them that thus they must move their wings, that thus they must mount.

There is no teaching like teaching by example. We always learn a great deal more through our eyes and ears than we do merely through our ears, and those of us who cannot preach with our mouths would do well to preach with our lives—which is the very best kind of preaching.

So God preaches to us. If He would have us holy, how holy He is Himself! “Be ye holy for I am holy.” Would He have us generous? How generous is He! “He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all.” Would He have us forgive our enemies? How He delights in mercy Himself! If we need a picture of perfection, where can we get it but in God? “Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

God shows us His law in His holy actions, He being Himself the very mirror and paragon of everything that is absolutely pure and right. Above all, the Lord has been pleased to set us an example of mounting above the world, in the Person and life of His own dear Son. Oh, how the eagle flutters when I look upon the Savior!

*“Such was Thy truth and such Thy zeal,
Such deference to Thy Father’s will,
Such love and meekness so divine
I would transcribe and make them mine.*

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Thy prayer:
The desert Thy temptations knew,
Thy conflict and Thy victory, too.*

*“Be Thou my pattern—make me bear
More of Thy gracious image here.
Then God the Judge shall own my name
Amongst the followers of the Lamb.”*

Beloved, see how our Lord Jesus this day mounts to heaven. There is He—He has gone there that our hearts may follow Him. He fluttered to the skies that we might also follow and might rise above the world, setting our affections no longer upon the things of earth, but upon things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

What way could there be of teaching us tenderness like the tenderness of the Savior? What method of teaching us love, like the display of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Would you learn? If you will not learn with Christ for your pattern, in what school shall you be trained? Brethren and sisters, I commend you to the picture of the eagle fluttering and thus setting an example to its little ones. You may also see before your eyes the great incarnate God teaching you how to mount above the trials and temptations of this mortal life and living even on earth a celestial life.

This, however, is not all the eagle does. We read in our text that she then *spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings*. I suppose this means just this, that spreading her wings she entices her young ones to get between her wings upon her back and then she mounts and flies towards the sun. It may be fable or not, I do not know, that she flies towards the sun to teach her eaglets to bear its blaze.

Then, when she has mounted to a good height, she suddenly shifts her wings and throws the young eaglets off, and there they are on their wings. They begin to descend to earth, not able to keep themselves up, but compelled to fly, but before they fall on the rocks, she makes a swoop and comes under them, and catches them on her wings again, gives them a little rest, bears them up once more, and then throws them off again, so that they must fly. But she takes care that these early trials, for which they are scarcely able, shall not end in their destruction, for again she makes another swoop and catches them between her wings once again.

This is the picture of what God does to us again. We must speak of Him after the metaphor which He Himself uses—He takes us up between those mighty wings and bears us as high as we dare go—and only pauses because He knows we cannot bear more now. Then, when we have had full fellowship and looked the sun in the face, and have had bright enjoyment of heaven, as far as we could bear, He throws us off suddenly and makes us try our own wings, and alas! they are very feeble and weak indeed.

We then discover our own impotence and we think we shall fall like stars and be dashed in pieces. But lo! He comes and underneath us are the everlasting wings, and just when we thought we should surely come to destruction, we find ourselves safely sheltered between the mighty pinions of the Eternal God.

Up, again, we mount, and before long we are thrown off again—cast away, as it were, for a time. His face is hidden from us, or else by some outward trial of providence we are made to try our wings again to see whether our faith will keep us up, and by degrees it comes to pass that we learn to fly till we love flying and are not satisfied to come back to earth anymore, loving to fly, and often sighing and longing for the day when we shall be permitted to—

*“Stretch our wings and fly
Straight to yonder worlds of joy.”*

Do you not sometimes feel as if your wing-feathers were come, my brethren? Surely you must sometimes feel as though your faith were growing stronger and your communion with Christ getting clearer—as though you anticipated and felt that the time must be drawing near when you could mount to dwell where Jesus is. I am thankful if such is your experience, but I should not wonder if you find that all the wing feathers which you have got will be all too few for you, for you may yet be made to have another descent from between the almighty wings, and be made once again to see how great your weakness is.

One other thought, however, occurs to us. There is no doubt that the idea of *security* as well as of teaching is here, because when the eagle bears her young ones on her wings, if the archer, or in these modern days the hunter with his rifle, should seek to destroy the eaglets, it is plain there is no reaching them without first killing the mother bird. So there is no destroying possible to the true people of God. “Greater is he that is for us, than all that can be against us.” God puts Himself between His people and the danger which threatens them, and unless the foe should be mightier than God Himself—which is inconceivable—there is no soul that trusts in Him which shall know eternal hurt.

Oh, how glorious a thing it is to feel, when the light air is all around me and I know that if I fall I should perish, that yet I cannot fall, for God’s wings bear me up, and to feel that though there are hosts of enemies able to destroy me if they can get at me, yet they cannot, for they must first get through God Himself before they can get to the weak soul who hangs upon Jesus and rests alone in Him.

Well did David say, “In the time of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me up upon a rock.” You know the threefold figure. The “pavilion” stood in the middle of the camp and all the armed men kept watch around the royal tent. There was no slaying the man who was hidden in the royal pavilion unless the king himself were destroyed.

And unless divine sovereignty be overthrown, not one of the elect can perish. Then, again, there was “the secret of the tabernacle.” That was the most holy place into which no one entered but the high priest once a year, and there God said He would put His child, so that they must first break through, and dare the very Shekinah, and come before the brightness, the destroying brightness, of JEHOVAH’s face, before they can reach the soul that trusts in the mercy seat on which the blood was sprinkled.

Then there is the third figure—“He shall set me up upon a rock”—so that the rock itself must shake—the immutability of God itself must cease to be, and God’s everlastingness must die before it

shall be possible for a soul to perish that rests in Him. The eagle takes up the eaglets on her wings and bears them, so in this way does God lead, and train, and guide us for the skies.

Dear brethren and sisters, I shall not detain you longer, except to say that if God is training you for the skies—oh, *let your hearts go up*. Grovel not below.

*“Go up, go up, my heart,
Dwell with thy God above;
For here thou canst rest,
Nor here give out thy love*

*“Go up, go up, my heart,
Be not a trifler here;
Ascend above these clouds,
Dwell in a higher sphere.*

*“Let not thy love flow out
To things so soil’d and dim;
Go up to heaven and God,
Take up thy love to Him.*

*“Waste not thy precious stores
On creature love below;
To God that wealth belongs,
On Him that wealth bestow.”*

You are a stranger here. If you are God’s child, then, you are a citizen of another country. Are there any bands to bind you here? I thought He had broken them. Have you never said—

*“The bands that bind my soul to earth
Are broken by His hand:
Before His cross I find myself
A stranger in the land.”*

Are there loved ones to bind you here?—

*“Thy Best-Beloved keeps His throne
On hills of light in worlds unknown.”*

All the love you dare to give, if you are true to Christ, to all below, can be as nothing compared with the love which you give to Him. Do you not feel your soul now drawn towards Him? At least if you cannot fly on the wings of confidence, fly on the wings of desire. A sigh will mount to Him, or He will come down to it.

Only be not fond of this world. Do not let this thick clay cleave to you. You are not earth-born now—you are born from above. This corruptible world must not claim you, for you are born again of incorruptible seed. You are not this world’s property. You are bought with a price by Him who prays for you that you may be with Him where He is and behold His glory.

I am ashamed of myself that I who talk thus with you should so often grovel here. But this one thing I must say—I am never happy except when my soul is up with my Lord. I know enough of this to own that it is my misery to feed upon the ashes of this world, to lie among the pots, to serve the brick-kilns of this Egypt. There can be no peace between my soul and this world.

Oh, I know this, for this painted Jezebel has mocked me too often and she has become so ugly in my esteem that I cannot endure her. But yet—what shall we say of our nature!—We go back again to the Marah, which was bitter for us to drink and try to drink from it again, and the broken cisterns which held no water aforetime, we fly to again and again.

Oh, for more wisdom! The Master has taught us, but He has been so long a time with us, and we have not known Him. Yet may He have patience with us, until He has taught us to mount above the world and dwell where He is!

Ah, dear friends, there are some of you to whom I cannot talk in this fashion because you cannot mount. You have nowhere to mount to. Oh, may the Master stir up your nests! I pray that He may put the thorns of conscience into your pillows tonight. May you recollect those sins which God hates and which God will punish—and if you do remember them and feel bowed down under their weight—then remember that there is one who can help you and who will help you, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Look to Him in the hour of trouble and He will be your deliverer. May the Lord bless these thoughts to all our souls for Jesu's sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

DEUTERONOMY 29:1-21

Verse 1. *These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.*

That is the preamble, just as in legal documents there is usually some statement of the purport and intent of the indenture before the matter is proceeded with. These covenants with God are solemn things and therefore they are given in a formal manner to strike attention and command our serious thoughts.

2-4. *And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.*

You saw all that and yet did not see it—you saw the external work, but the internal lesson you did not perceive. A very mournful statement to make, but God's servants are not sent to flatter man but to speak the truth—however painful the speaking of it may be.

5-6. *And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe did not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God.*

Either there had been means of frequent renewal of their garments, or else by a miracle these garments had never worn out. And the very shoes that they put upon their feet on the Passover night were on their feet still—if not the same, yet still they were shod, though they trod the weary wilderness which well might have worn them till they were bare. “Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink”—a nation of total abstainers for forty years.

There was no bread in the wilderness for them and there was no wine. It may have been obtained as a great luxury, as it probably was, for we have reason to believe that Nadab and Abihu were slain by fire before the Lord because they were drunken when they offered strange fire—but taking the whole people around, anything like wine had not crossed their lips for forty years, yet there they were, strong and healthy. “That you may know that I am JEHOVAH your God.”

7. *And when you came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them:*

People not used to war either, and feeble folk, yet they smote the great kings and slew mighty kings, for the Lord was with them.

8-9. *And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.*

This, then, was the covenant made with the nation—that God would be their God and He would prosper them. As He had done, so would He do—He would be their protector, defender, strength, and crown and joy.

10-11. *Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water:*

This national covenant embraced all the great men, the captains, the wise men, all that were in authority, “your elders, and your officers.” It took in all their children, for it was a covenant according to the flesh and their children according to the flesh are included. “Thy wives,” too, for in this matter there was no sex. “The stranger also.”

Here we poor Gentiles get a glimpse of comfort, even though from that old covenant we seem to be shut out. “Thy stranger that is in thy camp” is included. And the poorest, and those that performed the most menial service, were all to be made partakers of this covenant, “from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water.”

12-15. *That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day:*

With the sick that were at home, with the generations that were not yet born, for this was intended to be a national covenant in perpetuity to their children and their children’s children to the end of time. Had they kept it so would it have stood.

16-17. *(For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; and ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:)*

Now you have seen how they worshipped idols. You have seen that you may avoid—you have beheld their folly that you may escape from it.

18. *Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;*

For the worship of false gods is the cause of untold mischief and evil—wherever it is found it is a root that bears gall and wormwood, and God would not have it in a single individual, man nor woman, nay, not in a single family or tribe.

19. *And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:*

For there were some who so hardened themselves against God that they said, “We shall have peace. Let us do what we like—let us worship these idol gods more and more and more—let us add drunkenness and idolatry to our thirst.”

20. *The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him,*

Not light upon him, but lie upon him—rest there and stop there.

20-21. *And the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel,*

As a huntsman separates a stag from the herd that he may hunt it all day, so shall God with any idolater that should come amongst His people with whom He made a covenant that day. Oh, how God

hates that anything should be worshipped by us but Himself. How indignant is He if anywhere anything takes the supreme place in the human heart which ought to be occupied by God alone.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.